

## **EASTER SUNDAY 2014 - ST.DAVID'S CATHEDRAL**

### **Archbishop George Stack**

In the year 2000, the National Gallery in London mounted an exhibition to mark the new Millennium. It was called "Seeing Salvation" and traced the image of Christ through sculpture, painting and drawing over the last two thousand years. The exhibition was a triumph, attendance figures far exceeding anything the Gallery had expected.

Two pictures of the Risen Christ have always stayed with me. The first was by the 16<sup>th</sup> century artist Titian and portrayed the scene of Mary Magdalene and Jesus in the Garden on the first Easter morning. The picture is called "Noli me Tangere" Jesus says to Mary "Do not touch me." The second picture is by the 17<sup>th</sup> century artist Bernardo Strozzi. It is called "The Incredulity of St. Thomas". The first time Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, Thomas was not in the room. When he was told by the others they had seen Jesus he said "Unless I put my fingers into the holes made by the nails, I refuse to believe". We call him Doubting Thomas. The picture shows Jesus drawing the finger of Thomas to the wounds of his hands and his side. In that action Jesus says "Touch me".

Each of these pictures show different aspects of the reality of believing and following Christ. There are times when we need to touch, to feel, to be reassured, to feel confident in our faith. "Touch me". And there are other times when we must walk by faith alone, having few of the traditional "comforts" as we use to call them, struggling to make sense of the complexities of life, the challenge facing believer and non believer alike. Rowan William writes "Mary Magdalene tried to cling to a Jesus from the past – her past. Her initial reaction must surely have been that the impossible had happened, that history had been reversed. It hasn't, of course. The crucifixion has happened. The friends and enemies of Jesus had made irrevocable decisions surrounding it. Now, in the light of the resurrection, they have to decide what to do with their compromise". Forgiveness of sin does not do away with sinful experiences. It transforms them.

Having encountered the risen Christ, his followers heard him say "I am going to my Father and your Father". They probably didn't have a clue what he was talking about. But in faith he was calling them, and us, to follow him. On that journey we need to travel light. No self-justification. Jesus doesn't

reassure me of my innocence. Nor satisfaction of knowing that I am always right. He assures me of forgiveness and hope. If we have caught a glimpse of the Risen Life of Jesus this Easter, then our daily life cannot be the same again.

Jesus says to Thomas “Blessed are those who have not seen yet believe”. They are spoken to all of us who walk by faith. The words of Thomas could well be our faith-full response this Easter morning. “My Lord and my God”.